

INS REPORTER

Houston District Office

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Director's Corner

This has been a very busy time for all of us here at the INS as we provide services to hundreds of customers planning to travel during the holiday season. We are busy implementing new mandates as we transition into the Department of Homeland Security, new "home" for the service and enforcement functions of the INS. One important and visible mandate is the effective implementation of the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) the agency's first step towards developing a comprehensive entry-exit program. As some of you are aware, registration entails two key steps: Initial registration at ports of entry for nationals of certain countries and follow up compliance interviews at district offices. We are committed to open lines of communication with key constituencies regarding this important initiative and will continue to share information on guidelines, timetables and procedures as it is made available to us. In the meantime, please keep us posted in the event that we can take advantage of any community gathering or information forum that will be conducive to sharing this message directly with those potentially impacted by NSEERS registration requirements.

Points of Interest

- Office Closures
12/25/02 Christmas Day
1/01/03 New Years Day
- Naturalization Ceremony
12/6/02 –N400 (Beaumont)
12/13/02–N600
- Customer Service Center
1-800-375-5283
www.ins.gov

A second note of interest this month is our agency's transition into the Department of Homeland Security. On November 25, President Bush signed the Homeland Security Act of 2002. This Act creates the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS). All of INS will be incorporated into the new Department. Immigration enforcement functions are to be part of the Border and Transportation Security Directorate, and immigration services will be

housed in the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, which will report directly to the Deputy Secretary for DHS. We will keep our customers and stakeholders informed on all new developments associated with this important transition and do anticipate more information as we officially join the DHS on March 1st. More information is found on the INS website.

A note of caution to holiday travelers: Please let your constituents know that those with pending applications should visit INS or an accredited agency before making plans to travel outside the country. For those pending adjustment, departing without securing advance parole can have disastrous consequences. We trust that you will assist us in the dissemination of this important reminder. I plan to continue reaching out to the community in the months to come and our staff is also readily available to provide training to community based organizations and others interested in learning more about status online inquiries. Many customers are still unaware that forms, information and even "how to" guidance is



available, free of charge, via the INS web page and other sources of information. We need to form close partnership with community based organizations, schools, and congressional offices in order to assist customers with their information and service needs.

Finally, on behalf of our staff, I wish you all a happy and safe holiday season. I am particularly grateful this year since it has been a long time since my family and I have lived in the United States. The warmth and generosity of spirit of all has been greatly appreciated.

Hipolito M. Acosta

Hipolito M. Acosta
Interim District Director

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NSEERS UPDATE

Under a mandate from the United States Congress, the Immigration and Naturalization Service began the implementation of the largest and most comprehensive entry-exit registration process for foreigners from certain countries to begin as early as November 15, 2002. The new National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) requires that the INS now photograph, fingerprint and enter and compare in a database information about foreigners who are from countries that may pose a threat to the National Security. Phase I of the NSEERS registration requirements rolled out on November 15, 2002, thus requiring all males ages 16

and older from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan or Syria to register at the nearest INS office if they intend on staying in the U.S. on/or after December 16.

Since September 11, 2001; national security concerns and continued threats have changed drastically the manner in which foreign visitors now enter and exit this country.

In Phase II of the NSEERS program, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, The United Arab Emirates or Yemen were added to the list of countries that must now register if they intend to stay in the U.S. on/or until January 10, 2003. This list of countries also requires males ages 16

and older who are from these designated countries and meet the initial criteria also register at the nearest INS office under the program. Failure to do so places the foreign citizen or visitor into removal proceedings, arrest, detention and removal under the new laws. Since September 11, 2001; national security concerns and continued threats have changed drastically the manner in which foreign visitors now enter and exit this country.

Attorney General, John Ashcroft has the legal authority to make the determination under Section 265(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by Title 8, USC, Section 1305(b), and section 263(a) of the INA and 8 USC, Section 1303(a).

The President's Memo on the DHS

Yesterday I signed into law legislation to create the new Department of Homeland Security. It will unite our efforts under one roof and behind one primary mission: to protect the American people from another terrorist attack.

Achieving that goal is my highest and most urgent priority as President. Our success is made possible by the hard work and unwavering dedication you've shown before and after September 11th. Americans owe you their gratitude for helping to keep their families safe and their communities secure.

As you know, the Department of Homeland Security will focus on three critical objectives to:

- ◆ Prevent terrorist attacks within the United States
- ◆ Reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism
- ◆ Minimize the damage from potential attacks and natural disasters

Transition time line:

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 will become effective on January 24, 2003, 60 days after President Bush signed it.

Within 60 days of signing the law, the President was required to submit to Congress a reorganization plan for the transition of agencies, personnel, assets, and obligations to the Department. The President submitted the reorganization plan on November 25, 2002, and may modify the plan as necessary.

According to the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the transfer of agencies can begin no earlier than 90 days after "the reorganization plan has been submitted to Congress." The reorganization plan states that INS functions will be transferred to the new Department on March 1, 2003. The INS will cease to exist "upon completion of all transfers from the Immigration and Naturalization Service provided for by this Act."

Specific requirements related to immigration functions include the submission of an implementation plan no later than 120 days after the law's effective date. The implementation plan must include details about the separation of service and enforcement functions. The INS planning done to date to separate these functions provides the building blocks of this implementation plan. Specific requirements for the plan include:

- Organizational structure, including the field structure
- Chain of command
- Procedures for interaction among such bureaus
- Fraud detection and investigation
- The processing and handling of removal proceedings, including expedited removal and applications for relief from removal
- Establishment of a transition team

Methods to phase in the costs of separating the administrative support systems of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in order to provide for separate administrative support systems for enforcement and services.

THE PRESIDENT'S MEMO CON'T

We will form the new Department as soon as possible. Under the terms of the initial plan I sent to the Congress, nearly all the affected agencies would be brought together on March 1 of next year.

We are assembling a great leadership team, made up of proven decision-makers who know how to get the job done. They share your vision and commitment to a more secure homeland. I intend to nominate Governor Tom Ridge to serve as Secretary of the new Department of Homeland Security, Mr. Gordon England to serve as Deputy Secretary, and Mr. Asa Hutchinson to serve as Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security.

Many of you are familiar with Governor Tom Ridge. As the Nation's first Homeland Security Advisor, he exercised tremendous leadership on a complex, multifaceted topic. For him, homeland security is a national effort, not simply a Federal one. Governor Ridge served as Governor of Pennsylvania for almost 6 years. Prior to that he was elected six times to the United States House of Representatives with overwhelming majorities. He is also a decorated Vietnam veteran. Governor Ridge has earned my trust and the trust of the American people. He will make a great Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary of the Navy Gordon England will leave his position to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Prior to his time at the Department of the Navy, Secretary England served as executive vice president of General Dynamics Corporation from 1997-2001. In addition to his background in mergers and acquisitions, his private sector experience includes management experience at Combat Systems Group, General Dynamics Fort Worth aircraft company, and General Dynamics Land Systems. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland and the M.J. Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University.

Asa Hutchinson currently serves as Administrator of Drug Enforcement (DEA). As head of DEA, Administrator Hutchinson has focused his efforts at dismantling high-profile drug trafficking organizations including the Arellano Felix organization. Prior to his tenure at DEA, Administrator Hutchinson served for three terms in the United States House of Representatives where he served on the House Judiciary Committee and Select Committee on Intelligence.

Once again, thank you for your dedication and commitment to homeland security and to our great country. During this time of transition it is extremely important that you continue to stay focused on your important duties and responsibilities. I appreciate all that you have done -- and all that we are about to do together during this historic chapter in our Nation's history.

GEORGE W. BUSH

LOCAL PROCEDURES FOR NATIONAL SECURITY ENTRY/EXIT REGISTRATION SYSTEM (NSEERS)

On Sept. 11th the U. S. began the NSEERS enrollment at the Ports of Entry. Under this program, temporary foreign visitors (non-immigrant aliens) coming from certain countries or who meet certain intelligence based criteria are identified at the IAH Airport. Visitors are required to be fingerprinted and photographed as well as to provide detailed information about their visit to the U.S.

Upon departure, they are required to report to the Inspectors at the Port of Entry. At Bush Intercontinental Airport, departing visitors should report through the Red Doors located in Terminal D, 2 hours before their departure time. They must have their passport and their airline ticket. The exit interview takes approximately 20-30 minutes

The process has operated effectively with participation of foreign visitors from 135 countries throughout the nation. The individuals registered are provided with instructions after the initial interview and required to report to the closest District Office if they are staying more than 30 days. You can find the latest information on the web-site at www.ins.gov or you may call 1-800-375-5283.

DISTRICT OFFICE PROCEDURES FOR REGISTRATION

INS Officers in Houston have made every effort to minimize any delay or inconvenience to those individuals required to register under the NSEERS program. Individuals should register at their nearest INS District Office. NSEERS Registrants will enter the building by waiting in the general line with the public and going through the "triage".

Upon identifying themselves to the information officers, the information will verify that the applicant meets the criteria for interview/registration. The registrant will be given an NSEERS compliance interview notice and instructed to proceed to the interior duty room and place the interview notice in the tray.

NSEERS registrants can only be accommodated until 1:00 p.m.. Registrants who appear after 1:00 p.m. will be given a notice to appear the following day at 6:30 am. From 6:30 until 8:00 a.m., an NSEERS officer will identify applicants and direct them to the appropriate waiting area to insure interviews begin as early as possible. Most registrants should expect to be interviewed same day

(depending on the volume of registrants). If we are unable to interview them that morning, they will be given an interview notice for the following day.

If you have any questions regarding the procedures you may call 1-800-375-5283 or you may check the website at:

www.ins.gov

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This is an unofficial electronic newsletter published monthly by the Houston Office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to help provide immigration-related information to INS external audiences. This publication should include but is not limited to our monthly progress report, web site, phone numbers, contact names, brief explanations of INS processes and procedures.

For more information check our web site at
www.ins.usdoj.gov